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May 2, 2007

Dear Michigan Judiciary Committee Members:

We strongly encourage your full support of House Bill 4259, the second parent adoption legislation. As Michigan foster parents and faculty members who research in the area of child welfare, we promote this bill and recognize it as a necessary and efficient response to the plight of thousands of children in our state.

Although not a foster care bill per se, the legislation will have a most positive ripple effect on Michigan's foster care system, which is already over burdened and struggling for additional financial support in order to secure the services it provides. The current class action lawsuit filed against Michigan's foster care system has exposed the need for immediate implementation of viable remedies such as HB 4259. Many foster parents are unable or hesitant to adopt children out of the foster care system due to the lack of legal stability that joint adoptions provide.

We share our current foster parenting case as an example. At present, we are foster parents for an 8-year old boy, who has resided in our care for over a year. He and his nine siblings are re-entries into Michigan's foster care system, and a termination trial is scheduled for next month. There are five sets of foster parents involved with the case, ourselves included. We are most willing to adopt this young boy should termination of parental rights occur, and offer him a stable, life-long home without cost or undue burden to the State of Michigan. Yet, we are unable to both join in this commitment, as current adoption laws do not recognize and affirm our status (two unmarried individuals).

As researchers at two Michigan universities we devote our scholarly pursuits to welfare children and the professionals who serve them. We consider it our responsibility to allow our research to inform the State that this bill upholds the very ideals for which the social welfare profession promotes. *This legislation is timely, necessary, and comprehensive in its scope.*

Without any hesitations, we strongly urge your full endorsement of this bill.

Respectfully,



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